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In Memoriam

Edwin Booth



Memorial Celebration
OF THE
SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
BIRTH OF
Edwin Booth



HELD IN THE
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN CONCERT HALL
NOVEMBER THE THIRTEENTH
MDCCCXCIII
BY
THE PLAYERS

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AT a meeting of the Board of Directors of The Players, held on Monday, the 9th of October, 1893, at the Club House, 16 Gramercy Park, New York, it was "Resolved, that in the opinion of this Board it is fitting that the anniversary of the birthday of our eminent Founder, Mr. Edwin Booth, should this year be marked in some special manner, and that the President of the Club is hereby authorized to appoint a committee of twelve members, with power to add to their number, to arrange for a public meeting on the 13th of November, at which appropriate exercises in memory of Mr. Booth shall be held."

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"Good night, sweet Prince."

In Memoriam.

*Edwin Booth,
Born - November 13th, 1833.*

*Madison Square Garden Concert Hall,
on Monday afternoon, November thirteenth,
at half past three o'clock,
under the direction of
The Players.*

Admit one.

The Programme

In Memoriam

EDWIN BOOTH

Madison Square Garden Concert Hall
November 13th 1893

THE PROGRAMME

I

Dead March from "Saul"

Handel

(Used by MR. BOOTH in *Hamlet*)

II

Introductory Address

JOSEPH JEFFERSON

III

Commemorative Address

PARKE GODWIN

IV

Overture—Phantasie "Hamlet"

Tschaihowsky

V

Elegy

GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

THE PROGRAMME

VI

Nocturne "Midsummer Night's Dream" *Mendelssohn*

VII

Address

TOMMASO SALVINI

VIII

Translation of Signor Salvini's Address

Read by HENRY MILLER

IX

Address

HENRY IRVING

X

Slumber Music "Romeo and Juliet" *Gounod*

Music by the New York Symphony Orchestra

WALTER DAMROSCH, Director

The Addresses

Introductory Address

JOSEPH JEFFERSON

IT becomes my duty to present to this assembly the distinguished speakers of the hour. You will hear an elegy from Mr. Woodberry; a commemorative address will be spoken by Mr. Parke Godwin; a translation of Signor Salvini's address will be delivered to you by Mr. Henry Miller. In addition to this, there will be words of praise spoken for the one whom we mourn, by two of his histrionic brothers from across the sea. They have acted with him, upon the same stage. They have revealed their superb art with him. Those who have been fortunate enough to witness these scenes have indeed something to remember. Possibly it will be gratifying to you, as it is to his brother actors in America, and as it is to me, to know that those gentlemen are to speak of him. It attests that he not only left his indelible mark here, but his impress upon other shores as well. I need scarcely say to you that those distinguished actors are Tommaso Salvini and Henry Irving.

Signor Salvini has requested me to say that it has been impossible for him to memorize that which he has written, and that he will, of necessity, be compelled to read, instead of delivering it.

And here it would seem that my duty ends. But how can I

leave this place without telling you how closely allied I was, in friendship, to Edwin Booth. We were boys together. He was but sixteen years of age when I first met him—the sweetest nature and the most noble face I ever looked upon. His splendid social and dramatic career was marked by me from its beginning to its close. I trust I am not pressing too closely upon his early domestic life, when I say I was the confidant between him and the sweet lady to whom he gave his first love—was cognizant of his youthful courtship, his early marriage and the bereavement that followed after. I have acted with him upon the stage and rambled with him through the woods. We shared our youthful joys together, and in after years he leaned upon my arm, in the autumn of his sweet life, when broken down by illness and overwork.

It was but little more than a year ago that we strolled together, upon the seashore, and he spoke with strange cheerfulness of his approaching end; and if I remember his thoughts and words aright, he considered no man happy until he could enjoy the successes of his enemies. Surely this was an elevated condition for one who was about to step across the threshold from this world to the next.

We are all well acquainted with Edwin Booth's public career, but his private charities were only revealed to his nearest friends, and even these he would have concealed from all eyes had it been possible.

May I mention one? When he returned to San Francisco, after a twenty years' absence, he discovered the abode of an old lady who had acted with him in the years gone by. He found her in poverty, and his charitable hand surrounded her with every comfort for the rest of her life.

Another: Over forty years ago his father, one of the great tragedians of the world, came to act in the city of Charleston, South Carolina. I was the boy stage-manager of the theatre

there. His father was ill. I called on him to see if I could do anything. I found the elder Booth lying upon a sofa, attended by his son. They were not at a hotel; they were living at the house of an old friend. I saw them under this hospitable roof together. Thirty years after, the unfortunate city of Charleston was shaken to its very center by a terrible earthquake, and that same house, with hundreds of others, was crushed to earth and the inmates injured and ruined. Before the fallen telegraph wires had been lifted an hour a message of comfort to that afflicted family was flashed over the wires by Edwin Booth, with a splendid gift that placed them beyond reach of want.

About five minutes ago, just before I entered this room—the occurrence is so recent that I feel bound to relate it—I was told that an old servant of Edwin Booth's, who had attended him many years, hearing of this ceremony, had come all the way from Richmond to be present. I need not say that she received a ticket of admission and had every courtesy shown her.

But I now must close, for I feel that I have been trespassing upon the time of others, and in doing so, I can only ask of you that in which I will join—a wrapt attention to the words you may hear.

Commemorative Address*

PARKE GODWIN

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PLAYERS:

IT was but a few months since I was asked to speak some commemorative words of a dear friend deceased, who was a most distinguished and charming ornament of our literature, Mr. George William Curtis; and it is to me a most affecting incident that the last time I saw another dear friend—no less distinguished and charming in another sphere—he was reading those words with sympathetic approval. But as I listened to his over-generous appreciations I little thought how soon I should be asked to perform the same melancholy duty in respect to himself. I refer, of course, to Edwin Booth.

The name, as I pronounce it, falters upon my lips, for it recalls many hours of joy, with few of sorrow, while it reminds me that he is gone from us forever. We shall no more see that fine intellectual face which interpreted with so much beauty and truth the grandest creations of the foremost human intellect; we shall hear no more that melodious voice which added a new music to the music of poetry, whether it came to us in the flute-like tones of the sweet south breathing upon a bank of violets, or like the deep organ-pipe of the ocean when it breaks in heavy

* Owing to a want of time some passages of this address were not spoken, and are here supplied in print.

cadences on the coast; he will lead us no more into that ideal realm, whose golden portals are flung wide by the magic of genius, to reveal to us the grand figures of history and grander figures than history has ever known, men of heroic mould and colossal passions and women as fair and lovely as the women of a lover's dreams, whom it is a rapture to see, as it would be an education to know; and we shall no more feel the grasp of the hand whose pulsations were ever fresh and warm from the heart. He is gone—gone into the silent land—and how impenetrable and still it is. We peer into its darkness and the clouds only gather and thicken; we call to its people, and they answer us not again, and we are left to a faith that often wavers and a hope that often sinks; but as we walk in reverent ignorance backward let us indulge the hope and cherish the faith as better for us, perhaps, as a moral discipline than any clearer knowledge.

You will not expect me, in this brief hour of communion, to present you a detailed biography of Mr. Booth, or any elaborate estimate of his character and career: those are themes for a more deliberate occasion, and we can only glance at a few salient points which commend him to public remembrance. It would seem as if he had been dedicated to the theatre both by outward circumstances and inward vocation. If it cannot be said of him, as our venerable and genial President has said of himself, that he was almost born upon the stage, it may be said of him that he was cradled within sound of its plaudits, and nourished upon some of its noblest traditions. His father, Junius Brutus Booth, was one of that galaxy of actors who rose on the sunset of Garrick, and included among its bright particular stars the Kembles, Henderson, Cooke, Young, Cooper, Kean and Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neill. He was, indeed, a formidable rival of Kean, to whose jealousy he owed the signal honor, as we do the signal advantage, of his transfer from the metropolis to this western wilderness.

For many years he was the one cometary splendor of our theatrical skies, and showed the way to a host of luminaries who have since dazzled our eyes, without paling his effulgence. For if the younger sort in those early days were disposed to lose themselves in bursts of admiration over any of these, the older heads would simply remark, "Ah, yes! very well, very well; but have you ever seen Booth?" as if that were at once the climax and close of all possible criticism.

Well, it is among my earliest recollections to have seen that meteor, as he flashed across the boards of the old Park Theatre, as Richard or Sir Giles or Pescara, when I was too young to be critical, but not too young to receive an indelible impression of his power and brilliancy. Like Burbage, Garrick and Kean, he was small but of a compact figure, with a commanding presence, a most expressive face and great, luminous eyes that seemed to be set on fire from some inner volcanic source. His voice was less liquid than that of his son, and his carriage less dignified and graceful, but his outbreaks of passion, whether of rage or pathos, were simply titanic. In hearing them one could readily believe the stories that were told of his fellow actors stopping in their parts to gaze upon him in mute amazement and awe.

Edwin Booth, the fourth son of this eccentric genius, inherited many of his best qualities, and added to them others that tempered their intensity of blaze and mellowed the excesses of their energy. He was born on a farm near Baltimore, in Maryland, which the father had procured as a retreat from the glare and the bustle of the footlights; and he might have said, with more truth, perhaps, than Owen Glendower, that,

— "At my birth
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes —"

for he came into the world in November of 1833, during that meteoric shower of the 13th, which passed as phenomenal into the

annals of astronomy. I remember it distinctly, when we students of Princeton rushed out into the night to see the sky, from zenith to horizon, on every side, a sea of streaming flame, which recalled the most high and palmy state of Rome, "A little ere the mightiest Julius fell," when

"Stars with trains of fire and dews of blood
Disastered the sun,"

but they were deemed "the precursors of fierce events," while these in the milder superstition of the negroes augured a brilliant destiny.

More important to the new-comer than these exhalations was that grand drop of sunshine, the farm, where his limbs were nourished by the fresh juices of the earth, his lungs expanded by the winds, and his imagination kindled by the shapes and shadows of the darkling wood. His education there was elementary and limited—a little while at a lady's school, another little while under a foreign teacher, who taught him the violin, while the negroes around taught him the banjo, and a less while if any at a higher academy. Doubtless the father's presence was something of an education; for he was a scholar who read a great deal—an expert linguist—at least, he could present French parts to French audiences in their native tongue—and a gentleman of taste, who lined his walls with pictures and books. But any education there would have been irregular, considering the habit he had of carrying some of his children on his theatrical tours. Edwin told me that he remembered being taken, when he was but five or six years old, behind the scenes, to await the exit of his father, who would then catch him in his arms, caress him and toss him in the air, repeating some nursery tale or song, as a mode of relieving the tension of his nerves.

Under these influences he naturally aspired to the stage, and a playfellow of his boyhood, who remembers him as a curly-

haired, bright-eyed, handsome lad, recalls his enthusiasm in that direction; but he always insisted that he would only play the villains, who had much to do and to say for themselves, while he despised the parts of lovers, whom he regarded as milksops. In that the incipient tragedian spoke. But the father was opposed to his children going upon the stage, not because he underestimated his profession, but because he doubted their capacity for it. And once in reply to a remonstrance, he petulantly exclaimed, "Well, let them play the banjo between the acts."

Edwin's first appearance, in 1849, when he was scarcely seventeen, was by accident—the failure of a friend whose part as Tressel, in Colley Cibber's mutilation of Richard III., he assumed, and the same companion, who was present, reports that while he carried himself with self-possession and dignity he was inaudible at the middle of the pit. The eminent Rufus Choate, a warm admirer of the father, was heard to remark on that occasion "that it was a great pity that eminent men should have such mediocre children." Edwin, however, persevered, and got himself regularly enlisted in the stock company at the remunerative salary of six dollars a week, which he was glad to get whenever he could. The parental objection seems soon to have disappeared, for he was pushed into a first part by the father himself, who refused in 1850 to appear in Richard, when he was announced for it, and insisted that Edwin should take his place. This was at the old National Theatre in this city, which became the Chatham Street Chapel, where in later years I saw an Abolition riot that was a good deal livelier than any play. One can easily fancy what an ordeal it must have been for a youth of eighteen to be substituted for the most famous actor of the day. At first he was received with some murmurs, but gradually won approval, and at the end was called before the curtain. He was a bit elated by his own success, but in after years said that it was a mere boyish imitation of his father, and

execrable at that. It, however, settled his career, and he became a Thespian for the rest of his days.

But his novitiate, or apprenticeship, passed on the outskirts of civilization, was a rough one, beset with drudgery, doubt and disaster. California in those days lay like a luminous golden haze on our western horizon, and thither many men turned in pursuit of fortune or fame. Among them the father and son crossed the pestilential isthmus in 1852 in high hopes of success, but destined to encounter a great deal of hardship and vicissitude. The father soon abandoned San Francisco for New Orleans, and died on his way north, leaving the son behind him to battle against the world for himself. In the larger cities on the coast Edwin did tolerably well, but his adventures among the mining camps of the foothills, as told by one of his companions, were full of grotesque yet painful incidents. They take us back to the very days of Shakespeare, when the licensed companies, driven from the metropolis by the plague, which often carried off more than one-fifth of the inhabitants, rambled through towns and villages, to exhibit their half-contraband wares, in the granges of farmers, in the back yards of inns or in booths on the open plain; but their experiences must have been luxurious compared to those which gave to Edwin Booth his earliest lessons. What with imprisonment in mountain burghs isolated by snow and threatened with starvation; with long tramps of thirty or fifty miles through slush and mud; with the cooking of their own food or the mending of their own clothes; with performances on boards laid across the billiard tables of saloons or on the trunks of fallen trees; with a free discharge of pistols now and then in the midst of some grand scene of heroism or love; and with a final return to the coast so utterly penniless as to render a resort to negro farces or a local travesty a necessary alternative to hopeless want, his entrance upon his career can not be said to have been either encouraging or cheerful.

Nor was the outcome much better of a voyage he made with a transient company to the islands of the South Seas, as far off then as the Antipodes now and almost quite as unknown. For what reason they went, unless it was to confirm a prophecy of Shakespeare that "eyes not yet created should o'er read his gentle verse," it is difficult to say; but they played in Australia, Samoa and Hawaii, sometimes before royal courts which probably did not understand a word of what they uttered, but more often to a frieze and background of dusky natives in full paradisaic costume and intermittent purses. This was in 1854. On the return to California, where an accomplished lady, Mrs. Forrest, had opened a successful theatre, the light began to dawn upon the youthful stroller, and he was enabled to show the mettle that was in him, and by a few astonishing hits to gather the means of getting back to the East.

These six novitiate years on the frontiers of civilization, and acting in companies picked from the roadside, and to audiences not at all exacting or refined in their demands, were years rather of drudgery and of crude and careless work than of education or discipline. They were years of apprenticeship and required severe labor and endurance, but did not impart the nicer qualities of culture. Yet they were not wholly fruitless. He acquired by them the mere mechanical tricks of his trade. They familiarized him with the scene, developed his voice, infused self-confidence, and perhaps awakened a higher ambition. On his return to the East in 1856, arduous trials awaited him there, which proved however, both educative and disciplinary. They opened his eyes to the defects of his old imitative and traditional methods, and threw him back upon native original methods, and his better judgment. Deficient in early cultivation, and misled by the accepted models of the times, he had to unlearn much that he had learned, and to learn much that he did not know. He did not leap to the top at once—nobody ever does—but had to climb to it,

through thickets and thorns, with an occasional tumble on the rocks. Even after he had ventured an appeal to the cultivated taste of Boston, and been approved, a foreign actress with whom he played refused to go on because of his ungainly and awkward ways. In contrast is the fact that when he played with Miss Cushman in *Macbeth* she differed so widely from his refined and intellectual conception of the character as to beg him to "remember that *Macbeth* was the great ancestor of all the Bowery villains." But Mr. Booth was not too conceited or too indifferent to learn; he read widely and carefully; he observed constantly and closely; and he was wise enough to put aside his faults when they were discovered to him, even when they were pointed out by unfriendly criticism. Perhaps the acquaintanceship that he formed at this time here in New York with a considerable number of young artists and literary men (now past masters in fame), who had been attracted to him by his rare modesty and unquestionable genius, may have helped to awaken his ambition for the highest places.

He began, however, at the bottom, with the study of details. He recalled that Garrick, who to a mind that attracted Burke, Johnson, Goldsmith and Reynolds added accomplishments that fascinated the multitude, was a most sedulous student in courts, on the streets, in asylums, and booths, of features, gestures, walk and tone; that Kean, apparently the most impulsive actor that had ever appeared, yet when preparing for *Lear* had practiced before a glass, night after night, demanding repeated rehearsals, and even marking his positions, his recoils and advances, on the stage in chalk, and he followed their examples. Anybody who will read his notes to Furness's *Variorum* edition of *Othello* will remark the importance he attached to every movement, every expression of face, every tone of the voice. Even his own performances were constant objects of observation with a view to their improvement. Once when I praised him highly on his *Macbeth*, of which I had formed conceptions, derived from the performance

of Macready, with whom, next to Werner, it was his best, he replied: "It is only a study, but I think I can make something of it yet." At another time, happening into his room about noon, I found him prostrate on the sofa, half out of breath, and covered with perspiration, and exclaimed, "Not ill, I hope"; and he replied: "No; it is that abominable speech. I have been practicing it all the morning. I have shouted it and screeched it. I have roared it and mumbled it, and whispered it, but it will not come right." None the less, I observed afterwards that this very speech was so far right as to bring down a triple bob major of applause.

This attention to details seems, perhaps, mechanical, and it would be mechanical if regarded as an end alone, and not a means; but it is no more mechanical than the painter's study of his chalk drawing, from which he never deviates and yet fills out with all the glory of color and form. It is no more mechanical than the metres and rhythms the poet observes in order to reach the heights of poetic beauty and grandeur; it is no more mechanical than the inexorable laws of counterpoint which the musician obeys if he would delight the world with the loveliness of a chorus in *Lohengrin*, or with the sublime, cherubic, heavenly harmonies of a concerto in C minor. Genius is, of course, the main thing; its intuitions and sympathies are the prime movers, the breath of life, the source of all grand effects; but genius itself can only work by instruments, and when it mounts its winged Pegasus, or drives the coursers of the sun, it must still guide its steeds by snaffle and bit. Mr. Booth had the genius, but he had no less the judgment, the taste and the will to put an end to its mere curvetings and prancings, and to direct it toward its triumphal goals.

Mr. Booth's range of impersonation during these later six years of journey work, when he began to be recognized as "the hope of the living drama" (to use Barrett's phrase)—but not yet its full

realization—was quite broad, comprising both comic and tragic characters, some thirty in all. But he was more effective in tragedy than comedy, though not deficient in the latter. Those of you who saw his Benedick, his Petruchio and the lighter scenes of Ruy Blas and Don Cæsar de Bazan, will remember the extreme delicacy and grace of his comic delineations, which never degenerated into farce or buffoonery. If at times, in private life, among intimate friends, he was, like Yorick, “a fellow of infinite jest,” the humor which opens fountains of tears seemed to be more suited to his habitual temperament and tone of thought than that which ripples the face with smiles. As he grew older and more experienced he gravitated by a sort of native affinity towards the grander and more severe creations of Shakespeare—Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, the two Richards, Othello, Iago, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and Wolsey,—but not, if I remember rightly, Coriolanus or the Egyptian Antony. Now and then he strayed into other fields and gave us masterly representations of Richelieu, Pescara, Sir Giles and Bertuccio, and yet he seems to have avoided, purposely, Virginius, Damon, Pizarro, and the Gladiator, as perhaps a little too sentimentally *ad captandum* for the true artist. It was to Shakespeare he mainly aspired, and through him won the place, which he held for thirty years, of the foremost American actor. He had many worthy rivals, few, if any, equals; certainly no superiors. His most formidable competitor, Mr. Edwin Forrest, for whom he was partly named, a superb and impressive performer, was, through age and infirmity, falling into “the sere and yellow leaf” when he was in the prime of vigor and bloom. It may be that Mr. Forrest’s growing fondness for certain native tragedies, in which declamation took the place of poetry, or a cut-and-dried type of character that of real nature, may have separated himself somewhat from the currents in which æsthetic judgment was beginning to run.

It is the highest eulogy one can pronounce upon an English

actor to say that his masterpieces of performance were the masterpieces of Shakespeare's creation, for they imply more than the ordinary requirements of a good performer. These are manifold and of a high order, physical, intellectual, emotional and volitional, and these Mr. Booth possessed in a large measure, and he improved them by study and self-discipline. Small in stature, he was yet compact and well-proportioned in build, and he carried himself with a rare dignity and grace, so that his poses were always statuesque and his motions like the wave of the bending corn. His mobile features, lighted by large lustrous eyes, made his face not merely handsome, but exceedingly expressive; while his voice, clear as a bell, and loud as a trumpet, ran through the whole gamut of vocal utterance, marrying sweetness to sonorousness of sound without a jar. But to these mere outer gifts he joined rapidity and ease of emotional excitement, and, more important than the rest, a depth and breadth of intelligence which together enabled him to apprehend the most subtle as well as far-reaching thought of his author, and to respond to his sentiment as the musical chord does to the pulsations of the air.

His eminence in the Shakespeare circle was due to his possession of the latter qualities. The great Master differs from all other dramatic writers in many respects, but in two respects particularly, which put to the final test the powers of the actor. The first of these is his marvelous insight into what Tennyson called "The abysmal deeps of personality." Other writers are apt to delineate their personages from the outside, as embodying solely some imperious passion, or as charged with some one transcendent mission, which is to be presented, as the cannon ball flies, in an un-deviating line. Among the ancients, for example, no one can mistake in *Æschylus* as to what *Agamemnon*, *Antigone*, or *Orestes* has to do, or how it is to be done; amid the pomp of the language the way is always clear. Even among the more romantic moderns, no one disputes as to what *Karl Moor*, *Don Carlos*, *Egmont*, *Her-*

nani, or Triboulet means; nearly all actors would present them in the same way. But Shakespeare's persons are not so easily grasped, not because they are purposely or bunglingly obscure, but because they are at once so very deep and so very broad. In other words, while most writers write from the surface Shakespeare writes from the inmost center outward to the periphery, where he touches life on every side. His characters, therefore, are so involved in the infinite intricacies of inward motive and caprice, and so bound up with the incessant complexities and cross-play of outward circumstances that they must be studied closely and time and again to learn what they are. Nobody gets them at a glance. They are too profound to be fathomed by the eye alone, and too many-sided to be taken in by any single sympathy. Besides, while they are such complete and consistent individualities, growing from youth to age, that one has told of the girlhood of Shakespeare's heroines, and another of the after-wedded life of Benedick and Beatrice, of Imogen and Posthumus, of Isabella and the Duke, they are yet types of permanent and universal humanity, and to be interpreted, as the living man is, by a scale which widens and deepens as our own hearts and minds grow in experience and insight. Two hundred years of the astutest comment have not yet indicated their full significance.

The other trait of the great Master, an actor should always bear in mind, is the exuberance of his poetic nature, which exudes in words, diction, rhythm, scene, personage and story. Goethe was much reproached for having said once that Shakespeare was much more of a poet than he was of a dramatist, by which he merely meant that the poet was primary and predominant while the playwright was secondary. In other words, poetry is the very atmosphere in which he lives. He nowhere restricts himself, as Henry James accuses the great French authors of doing, to the multitudinous glaring outside life of the senses. He was as open as ever man was to every skyey and every earthy

influence, but through all these he saw "the deeper, stronger, subtler inward life, the wonderful adventures of the soul." Whatever theme he touches, though in itself commonplace and unpleasing, he steeps in the color of his fancy, and he scatters the color over all surrounding objects. Like a bird, he dips his wings in fetid pools only to disperse the water-drops in showers of pearls. Whatever story he tells or passion he portrays, though in themselves repellant or even hideous, he purges them of their grossness and lifts them into an air of ideal freshness. Like Niagara—which in its maddest plunge and loudest roar still waves the iridescent banner of its rainbow, and still sends up to the skies its mist-columns of diamonds—he raises his scenes, which in their literal nakedness might shock us with horror, up to the purer and serener heights of the ideal, where Æschylus not only heard the groans of the incestuous king and saw the wild-eyed furies in pursuit of Orestes, but heard, too, the thunder-tones of destiny and saw the dread forms of the immortals.

Mr. Booth grew to be keenly apprehensive of the characteristics of the Master, and studied them closely and brought them out as he best could into more and more distinctness and vividness. His representations, as he advanced, while they showed a closer analysis of character, which is a mark of thought, conveyed at the same time that higher ideal value which is the essence of poetry. He seemed to penetrate more and more into the interior significance of his personages by discerning more fully what was universal in them and so of permanent interest to humanity. Thus his *King Lear*, which in the beginning was the traditional *King Lear*, an irascible old man liable to sudden and fearful explosions of wrath, and who did many foolish things, gradually became the type of imperious arbitrary will undermining its own force, dispersing families and disrupting kingdoms through sheer caprice, and an exponent, not of a particular history, but of a universal truth of human nature. Thus

Hamlet, whom he once wrote of as an "unbalanced genius," was raised afterwards to the perfection of manhood, who, charged with an imperative duty it was impossible to execute, fell by the corrosive and destructive action of his own thoughts into distraction and madness, and brought down a whole beautiful world with his own ruin amidst a sound of wrangling bells. Thus Macbeth, on the surface a heartless and sanguinary tyrant who butchers his best friends and deluges his estates with blood, is shown to us in the end as infinitely more than that: as the victim of that irritable imaginativeness which, dealing with the darker powers, whelms reason, nature, conscience and affection in a vortex of hell-born dreams.

In the last two impersonations, it may be perhaps well to observe, Mr. Booth was assisted by a peculiarity of his own constitution, which lent them singular truth and awesomeness. I refer to his openness to those darker and more mysterious aspects of life which have been called the night side of nature. He was peculiarly sensitive to the hidden, subtle, boding, unfamiliar influences of that unknown and unfathomable ocean which rolls on the outside of our habitual and fixed experiences. He was at one time deeply interested in certain abnormal phenomena which are called spiritualism, and, indeed, in the jargon of its adepts he was considered a medium. Certainly he could tell some strange tales now and then of his unconscious cerebral excitements. But the only practical effect they had upon his conduct, so far as I could observe, was to deepen the awfulness of his representations of personages who had walked on the border lands of the unseen. His Hamlet, whatever the passion or occupation of the moment, was always haunted by the dread vision that came to him on the ramparts of Elsinore, and Macbeth was ever accompanied by the fatal sisters whose supernatural soliciting pushed him on while they consoled him in his immeasurable atrocities.

It was a consequence of Mr. Booth's careful study of his Shakespearian parts that he gradually refined his modes of rendering them out of the old boisterous, objurgatory and detonating style into one more gentle, and therefore, as I think, more artistic. He was at no period deficient in force and intensity of expression. His curses in *Lear* fell like avalanches from Alpen heights when a storm is on the hill; his alternations from joy to rage in *Shylock* throbbed and glowed with the red-heat of molten iron; the lament of *Othello* was like the moan of an archangel for a heaven betrayed and lost, ending in that remorseful cry, which "shivered to the tingling stars;" and I have heard him utter the simple phrase in the graveyard scene, "What! the poor *Ophelia*," with such heartbreaking pathos that whole rows of women, and of men too, took to their handkerchiefs. But he never found it necessary, at least in his later days, in order to get his feeling understood, to shriek like a maniac or to howl like a wounded wolf. He had taken to heart what the great Master, who could not be accused of tameness and frigidity, and who was doubtless as good a critic as he was a dramatist, had long since taught us in "the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of passion, to beget a temperance that must give it smoothness."

He had learned in particular two phases of emotional expression, which I do not suppose were original with him, but which are very important and require the utmost skill and delicacy of management. The first may be called the ascending phase of emotion, in which every strong passion fosters and aggravates itself, so that, beginning on a low level of excitement, it rises by its own self-generated vehemence, to a violent intensity. It was displayed by Mr. Booth in several passages of *Hamlet*, where, in spite of the strongest efforts at self-restraint, he is gradually carried away by the movements of his brain, and finally loses himself in a frenzy that passes for madness.

The other phase of expression to which I have referred, and which may be called the descending phase, exhibits a towering passion in its subsidence. It is said to have been one of the master-strokes of Kean, who, though fond of abrupt transitions—that is, from transports of frenzy to calmness or even sportiveness—was yet artist enough to know that this was not always natural, and so at times came down from his extreme heights by gradations of fall, like the waves of the sea which still heave and swell when the tempest is wholly past away. This effect was grandly given by Mr. Booth in *Lear*, whose tremendous discharges of anger are followed by sudden returns to patience and self-control, when his voice assumed to be calm, and his face appeared to be smooth, but the twitching muscles and the tremulous tones gave proof that the passion had not yet vanished.

It should always be borne in mind that it is not the aim of dramatic art, whether in authorship or representation, to bring forth monsters, either fiends, or freaks, or wild beasts. It presents us human beings, swayed even to madness in the intensity of their passions, but still human beings. Even in its most abnormal departures from the human type, as in *Caliban*, they have still many touches of human nature in them, which they show, if in no other way, by speaking its language, and at times uttering the most exquisite poetry. The drama, as Schiller says, “must unveil crime in its deformity, and place it before the eyes of men in all its colossal magnitude; it must diligently explore its dark snares and become familiar with sentiments at the wickedness of which the soul revolts”; but in doing so it does not cut itself loose from all semblance of manhood. Otherwise its personages would excite, not pity and terror, but horror. Richard, Iago, Shylock, Macbeth, do diabolical things, but they are none the less men, perverted by evil, hardened by crime, wholly bent away from goodness and truth, and yet capable of both goodness and truth, and at their worst exhibiting, perhaps, masterly intellect,

heroic courage, sublime defiance, strong affection—are like Milton's fallen angels, "the excess of glory obscured."

An open secret of Mr. Booth's success was the high conception he had formed and cherished of the dignity and usefulness of the theatrical function. Pained at times by the perversions of it in bad hands, he was yet not ashamed of his profession; nor did he suppose, as Macready appears to have done in later life, that he would have been better and happier in some other walk. On the contrary, he was proud of it, and rejoiced in his ability to serve it, and through it, the highest interests of the public. He was not insensible of its degradations, actual and possible, but he knew that it is precisely those things in our human nature which fall the lowest that are capable of the highest. He knew that dramatic literature is the highest form of intellectual achievement, and that the stage is the means by which it is most vividly interpreted and most widely diffused. In a general sense the principal aim of all art is to please, but we should remember that that pleasure ranges from the merest trivial amusement of the moment to that which Dryden calls noble pleasure, which interests alike and at once the intellect, the conscience, the imagination, the passions and the sensibilities in their finest and sweetest exercises, and leaves traces of exaltation that go sounding through the soul for ever. Even in its lightest forms, the pleasure produced by the histrionic art is not to be despised. The play—impulse, as Schiller calls it, in which it originates, and which gives rise to the delicious pranks of children and the merry sports and pastimes of the common people, is that instinct of human nature which lifts it out of the hard grind of necessity—whether physical or moral—and surrenders it to the joy of a disinterested freedom. Not only does it "ease the anguish of the torturing hour," but it is the main support—the generator and the regenerator—of whatever is most healthful and wholesome in the exercise of our faculties. In common par-

lance, we name it recreation, forgetting often that recreation is simply re-creation—or the making over of that which is worn, and not something fresh and new. Talleyrand used to say that the arrantest nonsense is very refreshing, and Shakespeare, in one of his eulogies of merriment, asserts that it both relieves the wear and the woe of life, and cures some of its afflictions. In this he anticipated the doctrine of modern science, which teaches that pleasurable excitements build up the nervous system and maintain it in health and growth, while depression, despondency, or sorrow—any form of pain, in fact—wastes it away, and ends in its total destruction. Assuredly we all of us know that a sound, hearty laugh clears the cobwebs from the brain and elevates the whole being into a more serene and invigorating air. But if that be true of our lower enjoyments what shall be said of the recuperative power of the higher sort which appeals at once and in harmonious union to those lofty capacities which are the distinguishing marks of humanity—which, separating man from every other form of existence, make him what he is, the crown and consummation of creation—the paragon of animals—the beauty of the world—and infinitely grander than all “this brave o’erhanging firmament,” with its “majestical roof fretted with golden fire.”

Now, dramatic art, as I have said, appropriates to itself the excellences of all other forms of art, and supplements them with excellences of its own. It abounds in that prose which is “full of wise saws and modern instances”; its naïve and racy songs furnish the best specimens of lyric enthusiasm; it rivals the solemn epic in the grandeur of its stories, and, not satisfied with speech, it calls in as its assistants and handmaids the imposing splendors of architecture to build its temples, of sculpture and painting to adorn them, of eloquence to add charm to its utterances, and of the delicious exhilarations of music, to bear the spirit on harmonious wings to elysian homes. Like other literature,

it rummages the ages for its themes ; it turns over the dusty leaves of chronicle and annalist for its persons, filling in their gaps of forgetfulness ; but, more than this, by its marvellous power of characterization, it clothes the skeletons of the dead past in flesh and blood, and presents them to us in their very habits as they lived. A thousand buried majesties revisit the glimpses of the moon ; the colossal demigods of old mythologies that helped to shape the primal chaos—the noble masters of antiquity, whose words have given law to the arts and policies of all future time—the chivalric champions of the oppressed and of womanhood in the middle ages—even the unknown heroes and heroines of domestic life, to say nothing of the fantastic little tricksters of faëry, who win our loves, revive, and we are made acquainted with men grander than any in actual history, and with women fairer than our visionary seraphs, and lovelier than our legendary saints, in that they are real women breathing thoughtful breath.

It is not merely the defense, it is the justification, nay, it is the pre-eminent glory of the theatre, that it is the great popular interpreter of this creative inspiration—the channel through which its rare and exquisite treasures are conveyed to the minds of the people. The lofty achievements of the human brain and heart, in nearly every other domain—its great poems, its great histories, its great systems of thought, its great pictures, and its great music, are a closed book to the masses. They are richly laden argosies that sail on the unseen ether of the skies, and not on the ordinary atmosphere. Few see them but those who have the opulence and the leisure to climb the golden step to the stars. They are an unknown realm—and how sad the thought!—to the vast majority of mankind even in the most cultivated nations. But the theatre brings the gold and the jewels of its Ophir mines of genius home to the bosom of nearly every class—one might add, of nearly every individual. It is the one institution of society which may be said to be, in the strict sense of the word, popular. Other institutions

touch the sensibilities, or tastes, or interests and rouse the souls of selected circles, but this goes directly to the sensibilities and rouses the souls of all. Consider, too, how incessant and wide are its influences. Victor Hugo has compared it to the ancient Tribune whence the orators fulminated over Greece, and to the modern Pulpit, which drops its heavenly messages in "rills of oily eloquence," but it has an immense advantage over either of these in its almost unbroken activity through space as well as in time. Every night of the week, in nearly every town and city of civilization, it is telling its tales and teaching its lessons of good or ill, and the Press alone surpasses it in the immediate reach and constancy of its work.

And what is that work? Nothing less than the whole sphere of human relations, which is precisely the sphere of our ethical being. It deals directly, almost exclusively, with the conduct of man to man, and morality is the breath of its life. It is essentially a moral force, a tremendous agency for good or evil. Scientists tell us that while there are evidences of a vast physical order in the external world there are no evidences of a moral order there. The grand forces of nature, regardless of man or his desires, drive the wheels of their chariots over his universe axle-deep in blood. Historians tell us that the final adjustments of events, the rewards of good, and the retributions of evil, are far apart in space, remote in time, and seldom observed, or not observed in the end by men who saw the beginning; but it is not so in the little world of the drama, where the consequences of conduct are near, open, and swift. Dramatic art controls the seasons of its own harvests, hangs its nemeses on the neck of its events, and freights the lighting-flashes of its auguries with the rattling thunder-peals of their fulfillment.

Such an agency is not to be neglected, much less derided, and especially by those who take the moral and religious interests of society into their special keeping; nor are the actual conductors of

it to be held up to derision, and excluded from the mercies of the all-merciful, as they were but an age ago. They are to be prized, as others are prized, by the faithful discharge of their function. If their shortcomings in the past have been lamentable, which of the professions shall throw the first stone? None the less let us hold them to their responsibilities, and remind them constantly of what an almost omnipotent means of human elevation they wield; and, as in the early days of the beautiful Grecian culture, the dramatists revived and perpetuated whatever was grand, awful and sublime in their almost forgotten traditions; as in the middle age the Church, the mightiest of spiritual forces, still called to its aid the Mysteries which brought home to the common people whatever was lovely and holy in Hebrew or Christian legend, so, in this enlightened Nineteenth Century shall we not demand of the drama that it shall take the lead in all the purifying, strengthening, broadening and elevating tendencies which make a progressive civilization?

It was Mr. Booth's conviction of the real possibilities of the stage that induced him to work for its improvement, not only in the parts he played, but in all its adjuncts and accessories. As far back as 1860, when he was the manager of the Winter Garden Theatre, following the example of Macready and the younger Kean in England, he put many pieces upon the stage with a degree of historical accuracy and impressiveness that was an education to our playgoers, and led the way in which our later Wallacks, Dalys and Palmers have creditably followed.

His opulent equipment of the Winter Garden went up in flames, but, nothing daunted, he soon after projected a theatre which should be a model of its kind, both for the comfort and safety of the audience, and the convenience of the players. It was made as complete as it could be in every respect, with the knowledge and resources at his command. Plays were produced with an accuracy and amplitude of artistic device that pleased

both mind and eye. Not only the plays in which he took part, but those in which others appeared.

That enterprise, in spite of its artistic merits, went down in bankruptcy, as the former had gone up in flame ; but the projector of it was not disheartened. Again he took to the road ; again the streams of Pactolus flowed into his pockets ; and again, having paid the last penny of former indebtedness, he bethought him, not of himself, but of his fellows. It was on a pleasant yachting voyage in the Summer time, with chosen friends, loving and beloved, along the picturesque coast of Maine, where high hills peep over their forests of greenery, and the far glance of dancing waves shoot back the bright beams of the sky, that he communicated to them his plans for an institution which, let us pray, the greediness of fire will not consume nor the maelstrom of finance absorb. He told them of the society, now called "The Players," to whose gratitude and hospitality we owe the splendid assemblage which honors this hall to-day. He gave to it all his available funds ; he gave to it the companions of his long silent life—his books ; and he gave to it the treasures of his secret heart—his pictures and his relics. His desire was to erect a home where the selected members of his profession might meet with one another, and with the representatives of other professions, in friendly intercourse and on terms of social equality and reciprocal esteem.

It is within the walls of its sumptuous edifice, as you walk its halls and corridors, that the pictures bring back to the eye the celebrities of the stage whom we all revere—and some of whom have found a place in England's proudest memorial of her honored dead. It is there that a letter, a sword, a lock of hair, or a tatter of dress restores Garrick, Kemble, Kean, Mrs. Siddons almost to the touch, and there the elder Booth, Cooke, Cooper, Elliston, Munden, Forrest, Wallack, Gilbert, Barnes, Placide and others look down upon you in genial serenity. As one sits

there, sometimes in a kind of reverie, he hears the tinkle of a little bell and he sees the curtain rise, and then a whole entrancing world of grace and splendor exhales like a glorious vision. It is there now that the genius, the beauty, the distinction of the city is gathered annually to lay its tributes of affection and respect at the feet of the Founder, whose good remembrance

“Lies richer in their thoughts than on his tomb.”

It was there that he spent his last hours, in communion with friends who deemed it an honor to be admitted to his confidence, and there his gentle spirit took its way to the welcomes of the good and great made perfect.

Like a light in the skies he has now passed below the dews and damps of the horizon; but may we not say of him with our earliest of poets:

“That the soft mem’ry of his virtues yet
Lingers like twilight hues, when the bright sun is set.”

May we not say of him, as of the good Duncan, that “after life’s fitful fever he sleeps well,” leaving behind him no rankling animosities, no unadjusted wrongs, no bitter remembrances, only sorrow and a grateful sense of his genius and goodness. In life, no doubt, he had his enemies—who has not?—but no one ever learned that fact from his own lips. There were those, perhaps, even of his own profession, who exaggerated his hereditary traits into personal faults, but it produced no bitter resentment in his heart. For the thirty years that I knew him with more or less intimacy I never heard him speak an unkind word of any human being. Yet he was as unassuming as he was generous, and I may add that during that long interval I never heard him speak unduly of himself, or of himself at all save in connection with some project for the public good.

Affliction fell upon him,—the early death of his father—whom he loved and honored—the withering of that fair flower now

“enskied and sainted,” around whose being the tenderest fibres of his heart were strung—that great public calamity, which for a moment blotted his heaven of future hope and happiness; but these misfortunes, while they may have deepened the lines of thought on his forehead, never galled his heart with a drop of despair or pessimism. Recovering with elastic spirit from every blow, he kept the even tenor of his way in the discharge of his duty, as he conceived it. The other day, in taking up his copy of “Macready’s Reminiscences,” I found near the close, where the veteran actor expresses dissatisfaction with his life, that Mr. Booth had penciled on the margin, “What would this man have? Blessed with education, with a loving family, with fame and fortune and the friendship of the great, he ought to have been supremely happy.” Mr. Booth was not supremely happy—few are; but he enjoyed life. He enjoyed it because he had discovered that true secret of tranquillity and content—the use of his faculties and his fortune, not as a means of self-indulgence or ostentation, but for the furtherance of general ends. Scarcely one of his more intimate friends but could tell you of some dark home brightened, of some decayed gentleman or gentlewoman raised to comfort and cheerfulness by his unseen but timely intervention. He had learned the deep wisdom of that epigram of Martial, which perhaps he had never read, which says that “What we possess and try to keep flies away, but what we give away remains a joyful possession forever.” It was for this his friends not only admired him, but loved him; and it was for this the greater public mingled with its admiration of the artist its attachment to the man. For, strange as it may seem, this man who had passed his life in the expression of simulated sentiments was in his own life the sincerest and truest of men. This man, who, like a nomad, had spent his days in wandering over the earth, prized above all things else the retirement and seclusion of the home; this conspicuous leader of a profession more than others

exposed to temptation, preserved himself as pure as the wind-sifted snow of the mountains; and he, the popular idol, who had only to appear upon the boards to awaken round upon round of rapturous applause, dreaded notoriety, shunned the crowd and loved to be alone with his own thoughts. How gentle he was there I cannot tell you—as gentle as the breeze that will not detach the delicate blossom from the stem; nor how strong he was in his adherence to duty—as strong as the oak that no blasts from the hills can pull up by its roots.

Therefore it was that a strong personal feeling pervaded his popularity. Recall those final days, when he was laid upon the couch of pain, and remember how eagerly we followed the bulletins, rejoicing when they were favorable and sorrowing when they were not so. Tried skill and devoted affection were gathered about that couch—the affections of life-long friends, and of one, the image of her who had long since gone to prepare his way; but neither skill nor affection could delay the death-hour, and when, on that sweet, soft day of June, as light and warmth were broadening over the earth, and the trees had put on a fuller, and richer green, it was announced that his eyes were finally closed on all this brightness and beauty—how instinctively we exclaimed with Horatio, bending over the prostrate form of Hamlet, “Now cracks a noble heart!” and as the big tears flushed our eyes, how we added with him: “Good-night, sweet Prince! And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.” Indeed, may we not repeat it here, “Good-night, sweet Prince,” and as we utter it may we not hear with our finer ears a responsive echo, floating with solemn softness, downward from the heights, “Good-night, dear friends, God bless you all; good-night!”

III

Elegy

GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

LINGER ye here, all lovers of the soul,
Nor, careful of our grief, too far remove
From the last rites of love!

Bend hither your sad hearts, no more to flow
With deaths of ill-starred kings and tears of time,
Plucked from your bosoms by a feignèd woe;
But from the living fountain learn to shed
Some drops of sorrow for the player dead,
While round his earth dirges of sorrow go!

Who mourn him, if not ye he taught to weep?
Yours are the hearts he sought, the hearts he won.
This solemn hour with sad observance keep,
O living throng, felt round his mortal sleep
With man's long tribute unto greatness gone!
Ah, not as o'er the violet in his prime,
For him sweet pastoral notes and mused rhyme
The shroud of beauty weave, and leave him so;
But honor's breath and virtue's pure acclaim,
Meeds of long life, guerdons of happy fame,
To future ages shall his blazon show.
In lowly dust abides his honored head,

But in the thoughts of men he shall aye climb,
 Who greatly gave his life to noble ends,
 And in himself his country's honor stored,
 And, past our borders, was our fame abroad;
 Not unlamented he to night descends,
 Who with the people's life his genius blends;
 Innumerable sorrow and unseen farewell,
 And what the heart but to itself doth tell,
 Shall be his passing-bell.

The wide stage darkens with such rare eclipse
 As brings the hush upon all breathing lips;
 Yet is this silence one that doth belong
 To music, and this shadow unto song,
 That leads us up again to heavenly light,
 And makes fame pure, and grants immortal right.
 Nor shall the Muse's ample store afford
 Less than her flourished laurel for his shroud,
 Who followed, for his master and his lord,
 Her son, on whom immortal ages crowd,—
 Him who, erewhile,—him, too,—with sorrow loud
 And Thames's song, was to his silence borne
 In Stratford; yet again she bids men mourn
 Her tragic grave, and by the Atlantic sea
 Hath set her stone of perfect memory.
 Nor thou the last,—great Mother of our verse
 And Avon's source, that loudest thy fame doth sound,
 Who laid thy emblems on his sable hearse—
 Honor the fellow of thy master-mind,
 Who, far as round the illumined world doth reach
 The large dominion of thy conquering speech,
 Bore England's greatest message to mankind!
 To him once more let all men's voices roll,
 Though the loud plaudit fallen to low lament;

The breath of praise to him be, mourning, sent,
From city and continent
And every soil his voice made Shakspeare's ground;
Yet greatest love for him shall here be found.

For first of men born ours he did advance
In the world's front our title to the crown,
And with old glory blend our young renown,
In tragedy a victor; and his glance
Knew none but equals on that ancient ground,
Yet in each rival there a kinsman found,
While rolled his triumph to the Danube's bound.
What could he less, inheriting his race,
Ancestral honor, and the happy breed
That from old Burbage heired the players' art,
And in young Garrick treasured up the seed,
In Kemble majesty, in Kean made grace?
The masters come not oft,
Who lighten in the soul, and ride aloft
On old Imagination's wingèd sphere;
But he was native there,
And could that orb of pale dominion steer,
Who bore the soul of Shakespeare in his heart
And bodied forth his world. O potent art,
Clothing with mortal mold the poet's thought,
That so could recreate
The beauty of dead princes and their state,
And all that glory to perdition brought—
Sorrows of song! O noble breast o'erfraught,
That such a weight of perilous stuff could carry,
And to the old words marry
The music of his tongue, his princely mien,
And beauty like the Muses' Mercury,
That like an antique god he trod the scene,

And every motion carved him where he stood
Fit for eternity!

Nor came he to this height by happy chance;
Nor birth nor fortune to that presence thrust;
But wisest labor and strict governance.
Lower than in himself he dared not trust,
But his dear study of perfection made,
Refining nature's gifts with learning's aid.
The scholar's page oft lit his lonely hour,
Yet spared all knowledge alien to his power;
The true tradition, wandering from its source,
Taught by his memory, found its ancient course;
Informed with mind now Shylock shook the stage,
And subtly tempered burst Lear's awful rage.
And more he brought than yet had ever been
To plant illusion in the painted scene,
And bade the arts a royal tribute pour
To make the pageant wealthier than before;
As in a living Rome ran Cæsar's blood,
And round the lovers fair Verona stood;
Yet well he knew the action to maintain
Against the scene, that else were laid in vain;
Happy who first had learned, though hid from youth,
What Prosper taught him from the buried book,
Whereon the brooding eyes of genius look,—
The way unto the heart is simple truth.

Thus did he mount the dais of the throne,
Thus did he leap into the royal siege,
And filled the stage, and in himself summed all.
Hark in our ears the poor Fool's lip-crushed moan!
Weep, Bolingbroke! he weeps, thy crownless liege!
Mount, Richard, mount! thy bloody murders call!
Alas, our eyes have seen,

IN MEMORIAM—EDWIN BOOTH

As if no other woe than this had been,
The heart-break of the Moor,—and heard, behind,
Of frank Iago's intellectual stealth
The panther footfall in the generous mind.
How oft with hearts elate
We watched the Cardinal play the match with fate
While, trembling, shook the state
More than his age,—whose mind, a kingdom's wealth,
Made everything but innocence his tool,
Daunted the throne and headlong threw the fool!
With Cassius did we plot, with Brutus walk.
O, why remember, now that all is fled,
How deep as life the fond illusion spread
Round him, who now is dead,
Till we with Hamlet seemed to live and talk!
O tender soul of human melancholy
That o'er him brooded like the firmament!
Thence had his eyes their supernatural fires
And his deep soul its element of night;
Thence had he felt the touch of great thoughts wholly,
That with mortality but ill consent,
The star-croست spirit's unconfined desires,
That in this brief breath plumes its fiery flight;
And on his brows hung ever the pale might
Of intellectual passion, inward bent,
Musing the bounds of Nature's continent,
In that great shadow where the mind aspires,
With flashes beautiful and eloquent;
There love, that flies abreast with thoughts of youth,
And glides, a splendor, by the wings of truth,
Over the luminous vague to darkness went,—
Like some slow-dying star down heaven's pole,
It moves o'er earth's blind frame and man's dark soul,

And passes out of sight,
 And the lone soul once more inurns its light.
 So in his blood the poet's passion wrought,
 His nature from within dark influence lent,
 While with his body, there, the spirit blent,
 And stamped the changeling of creative thought—
 The soul incarnate in its mortal bloom,
 The infinite, shut in how little room—
 The word, the act,—no more; yet thereof made
 The player who the heart of Hamlet played!
 Ah! who shall e'er forget the sweet, grave face,
 The beauty flowering from a stately race,
 The mind of majesty, the heart of grace?
 How like himself did all things there appear,
 And hued like him! over whose living head
 Stood the dark planet, and its burden shed—
 A world disordered, a distempered sphere,
 Crookèd events, and roughness everywhere—
 The jar of Nature's frame since, earthward wheeled,
 First with nativity the stars grew sad,
 And prescience of what should be sorrow, had:
 These were his world—who had a world within
 Of augury that bankrupts Nature's bond,
 A power, past her will, not from her source,
 Felt in the mind, with lightnings round her throne,
 Majestic flames, inheriting her gloom,
 Pale splendors, yet with power to illumine
 Time's buried tract and reaches of the tomb;
 There reigns the spirit, there is truly known,
 In whose unclouded sphere doth Nature roll,
 Herself an image; there, by shadows shown,
 He held the mirror up unto the soul,
 And from his bosom read the part alone,

The infinite of man within him sealed,
 And played himself—oh, with what truth exprest!
 He plucked the mystery from the Master's breast,
 But, ah, what mortal plucks it from his own?

Such was our Hamlet, whom the people knew,
 A soul of noble breath, sweet, kind and true;
 Our flesh and blood, yet of the world ideal,
 So native to immortal memory
 That to the world he hardly seems to die
 More than the poet's page, where buried lie
 The form and feature of eternity;
 But when we look within, what spirits there
 Move in the silence of that hallowed air!
 He in the mind shall his black mantle wear,
 Pore on the book and greet the players dear,
 And make dead Yorick with his memory fair.
 But, ah, for us, alas! who knew him near,
 Nearer the loss; ah, what shall yet appear
 Of all he was? For us the vacant chair,
 For us the vanished presence from the room,
 The silent bust, the portrait hung with gloom—
 He will not come, not come!
 Yet doth his figure linger on the sense,
 And Memory her sacred relics save
 Of voice, and hand, and silent influence,
 That some shall carry with them to the grave.
 No more beside the lighted hearth he stands,
 Bringing us welcome from o'erflowing hands—
 Our host, our benefactor and our friend,
 Faultless in all, who all in one could blend;
 Gracious, with something of old reverence;
 Generous, who never knew the gift he gave;
 Thoughtful, who for the least himself would waive;

IN MEMORIAM—EDWIN BOOTH

How oft we saw him in the evening light,
The patient sufferer in our daily sight!
Here was his home; here were his gathered friends;
Blest is the life that in such friendship ends!—
Nor further looks the verse, though taught to see
More nigh that heart of noble privacy,
Bosom of perfect trust, from guile how free,—
An open soul, with reticence refined—
Yet when he spoke a child might read his mind:
Only great souls have such simplicity.

Cease, flood of song, thy stream! now cease, and know
Thy silver fountains from all hearts do flow!
Cease now, my song, and learn to say good-night
To him whose glory lends thy stream its light!
The last great heir of the majestic stage
Has passed, and with him passes a great age;
Low with the elders lies his honored head,
And in one voice are many voices dead.
O old tradition, crusted with great names,
Our captain-jewels! lo, among them set,
Booth's, like a star! look you, how sweet it flames,
And with the luster of our tears still wet!
Farewell—farewell!—move, sweet soul, to thy rest;
Sleep cloud thy eyes, deep sleep be in thy breast!
Go, noble heart, unto our sons a name,
Through all men's praises to eternal fame!
Move, happy spirit, where all voices cease—
Through our love go, to where love's name is peace!

IV.

Address

TOMMASO SALVINI

GGI compiono sessant' anni' che la luce vide nascere un gran cuore ed una gran mente. Oggi or son cinque mesi e sei giorni questa mente e questo cuore si spensero in Edwin Booth. Tempo addietro non pensavo di trovarmi presente alla Commemorazione che in questo giorno si tributa giustamente all' integerrimo Cittadino, al grande Artista Americano.

Il Nobile Comitato di questa Commemorazione, fecemi l'onore d'invitarmi a prendervi parte, ed io accettai convinto del doveroso, sebbene tristo, ufficio, di rendere con le mie brevi parole, un modesto tributo, a chi si addiceva, per ragione di età, compiere per me, la missione che oggi tristamente eseguisco per lui; e se così fosse stato, era certo a vantaggio della schiera Drammatica, dell' America Settentrionale, che in lui, avrebbe ancora il Faro risplendente, che con la sua luce guide i naviganti dell' Arte, a ricoversi nel benevolo e sicuro suo Porto.

La traccia lasciata nella storia Drammatica da questo illustre, quanto benemerito Artista, la potenza del tempo non potrà mai cancellare come rimarrano perenni, scolpite nella mente e nel cuore dei contemporanei come, dei futuri, le doti elevate e generose dell' animo suo. Certo, fu un giorno di lutto Nazionale la sparizione di tanto uomo, e tutto dovettero

provarne quel cordoglio, che opprime l'anima, allorquando si perde un caro congiunto. Simile a quegli alberi immani che la mano dell' uomo recide, per esporle all' ammirazione del mondo, oggi, noi esponiamo, sebbene pallidamente, le virtù del grande artista, di cui, l'implacabile Natura, potè falciare la vita, ma non mai torle il fascino imperitvio della stimabile, universale ricordanza.

Fra le dolci compiacenze della mia carriera artistica, mi seduce quella d'essermi afratellato con attori di diversa favella della mia ma più che tutte, annovero e vanto la soddisfazione d'essere stato compagno (sebbene per breve tempo) a Edwin Booth. In quella fausta ricordanza si consolido l'estimazione che già da tempo nutrivo per lui, e potei convincermi ed affermarmi che se il Genio lo accompagnava come Artista, l'educazione, la coltura, e il delicato e retto sentire, mai lo abbandonarono come uomo. A buon dritto egli godeva dell' amore de' suoi Concittadini ; a buon dritto si affidava nella simpatia e rispetto de' suoi compagni d'Arte ai quali fu prodigo di consigli d'ammaestramenti, e di generose offerte, dedicando ad essi il Players Club come prova manifesta dell' affetto che sempre nutri per l'Arte e per i suoi sacerdoti.

Edwin Booth fu artista gentiluomo ! Lungo e superfluo sarebbe il ricordare, la serie, non breve, e sempre felice, delle sue impersonificazioni, che lo fecero salire all' alto seggio della Fama, restando egli sempre, modesto, gentile. ed affettuoso.

Boston, la città intellettuale, ne conserva gelosamente la salma ; e qui, in New York, ov' egli morì, nello splendido ritrovo ch' egli legò a suoi compagni, vi si respira il profumo delle sue virtù. Nella camera ove i suoi occhi si chiusero per sempre, e che con lo devote e squisita deliberazione, si conserva intatta come al momento della sua morte, in ogni oggetto rivive il suo sguardo penetrante, palpita il cuor suo e sembra che la sua mano stringa con effusione in segno di riconoscenza la mano di coloro che religiosamente visitano il santuario del grande Artista. Questa fu l'im-

pressione da me provata; questa è l'impressione che sentiranno tutti quelli, che come me, stimarono ed amarono Edwin Booth.

Ed ora? Melpomene e Talia lo accolsero nel loro Tempio; Eschilo, Euripide, Sofocle, Menandro, Plauto, e Terenzio lo circondano; Shakespeare gli stringe la mano! La Pleiade dei grandi Attori che furono lo abbracciano fraternamente; e mentre Esso, nei cieli, gioisce della Gloria che lo circonda, e per la quale dedicò la sua vita, noi qui si piange? L'apoteosi degl' illustri non si piange ne s'invidia! Si cerca d'emularla! È un audace pensiero—ma è pur' anco un nobile sentimento!

TRANSLATION OF SIGNOR SALVINI'S

Address

READ BY HENRY MILLER

SIXTY years are fulfilled to-day since the birth of a great heart and a great mind. To-day, five months and six days have passed since that mind and that heart were stilled in the death of Edwin Booth. In days gone by I did not foresee that I should be present at the commemoration which to-day so justly honors the citizen of integrity, the great artist of America.

The distinguished committee in charge of this commemoration did me the honor to invite me to take part in it, and I accepted, satisfied that it was my duty, even if a sad one, to render in a few words my modest tribute to one who ought rather, if age be considered, to have done for me the office which I to-day mournfully execute for him. And if it had been so, it would certainly have been to the gain of our dramatic band of North America, which in him could still possess the resplendent beacon whose light served to guide the navigators of our art to the kindly and secure shelter of their haven.

The ravages of time will never efface the mark traced in dramatic history by this artist, as illustrious as he was worthy; and the lofty and generous endowments of his soul will remain perennial, engraved in the minds and hearts not only of his admirers but of those to come. Surely the death of such a man

brought a day of national mourning, and all must have felt that heartache which oppresses the soul when a loved relative is lost. Like those huge trees which are exhibited to the admiration of the world, we show to-day, even in a weak portrayal, the virtue of this great artist. Implacable nature has indeed had the power to cut short his life, but not to take from him his imperishable crown of universal esteem and remembrance.

Among the sweetest pleasures of my dramatic career none is more sweet than this, that I have enjoyed fraternal relations with actors of a different tongue, and, highest of all, I count and boast the satisfaction of having been the companion, even for a brief period, of Edwin Booth. In this time of happy recollection the esteem which I had long cherished for him became established, and I had opportunity to observe that while Genius attended him as an artist, refinement, culture, delicacy and right feeling were never absent from him as a man. With good reason he enjoyed the love of his fellow-citizens, and confided in the sympathy and respect of his comrades on the stage, to whom he was a miracle of good counsel, of masterly teaching and of liberality; to whom he dedicated the Players' Club as a conspicuous proof of his enduring affection for his art and for its interpreters. Edwin Booth was as truly gentleman as artist. It would be tedious and superfluous to enumerate the long list of his uniformly felicitous impersonations. They raised him to the lofty throne of Fame; but he always remained modest, courteous and loving.

Boston, the intellectual city, jealously guards his clay, and here in New York, where he died, in the beautiful meeting-place which is his legacy to his companions, we breathe the perfume of his virtue. In the room where his eyes closed forever, and which, in execution of a laudable and delicate thought, is preserved intact as at the moment of his death, in every object his keen glance lives again, his heart pulsates, and it seems as if

IN MEMORIAM—EDWIN BOOTH

his hand warmly and gratefully pressed the hand of him who with religious respect seeks the sanctuary of the great artist. Such was the impression experienced by me, such is the impression which all will feel who, like me, esteem and love Edwin Booth.

And now? Melpomene and Thalia have welcomed him to their shrine. Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Menander, Plautus, Terence surround him. Shakespeare holds his hand. The constellation of great artists of the past welcomes in him a new luminary; and while he in the skies rejoices in the glory which envelopes him, and to which he devoted his life, shall we here weep? The apotheosis of the illustrious gives occasion not for tears but for envy! Let us strive to emulate it! The thought is audacious, but the aspiration is noble!

VI

Address

HENRY IRVING

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I ESTEEM it a very great privilege to be here to-day and to be permitted to take part in the proceedings which have been ordained to do honor to the memory of Edwin Booth.

I think I must be among the oldest of his friends, for more than thirty years ago, when beginning to make my way as an actor, and in the days of stock companies, I played with Edwin Booth an engagement of some weeks in the city of Manchester. I was the Bassanio, Laertes, Cassio, Wellborn and Wilford and many other characters to his Shylock, Hamlet, Othello, Sir Giles Overreach, Sir Edward Mortimer, etc. He was the star which floated across our horizon, bright, brilliant, buoyant, alert, full of vigor and fire and genius. An example to young actors, and one who seemed to show us something of the great traditions, the genius of which he inherited and the art of which he had learned from his great father. From that time we were friends, and it was a pride as well as a pleasure to me when, twenty years after that time, I had the honor of supporting him in my own theatre. Edwin Booth has done much for his art and much

IN MEMORIAM—EDWIN BOOTH

for the players, and there shall be no sweeter memento of his tender, affectionate nature than the home which he made in this city for the brothers of his craft—except the high place which he holds for all time in the hearts of his countrymen and of all those who love and work for the player's art.

“When musing on companions gone
We doubly feel ourselves alone.”

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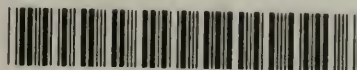
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